

## [UN agency dispatches 3.5 million doses of yellow fever vaccine to counter outbreak in Brazil](#)

31 March 2017 – In response to the yellow fever outbreak on-going in Brazil, some 3.5 million doses of vaccine from the emergency stockpile were deployed to the country through a United Nations-backed coordination mechanism, [according to](#) the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)).

The International Coordinating Group (ICG) on Vaccine Provision oversees a continuously replenished emergency stockpile of six million doses of yellow fever vaccine. The ICG includes four agencies: WHO, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF,) the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

The Government of Brazil, with the support of the Pan American Health Organization and WHO, is working to ensure protection of its population and preventing further spread of the yellow fever virus, which is transmitted to humans via mosquitoes.

Brazil is carrying out yellow fever vaccination campaigns in several states, while strengthening surveillance and case management throughout the country since the outbreak began in January 2017. More than 18.8 million doses of vaccine have been distributed.

During 2016 some 30 million doses of yellow fever vaccine from WHO’s emergency vaccine stockpile were deployed to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola during the 2016 yellow fever outbreaks in those countries.

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## [UN calls for recognizing the rights of people with autism to make their own decisions](#)

31 March 2017 – Ahead of World Autism Awareness Day, the United Nations today called for recognizing the rights of people with the spectrum neurological condition, which is believed to affect 70 million people around the world.

“Let us ensure that we make available the necessary accommodations and support to persons with [autism](#),” [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres said in his message for the [Day](#).”

“With access to the support they need and choose, they will be empowered to face the key milestones in every person’s life,” he added, making decisions such as where and with whom to live, what type of work to pursue and how to manage their personal finances.

One in 160 children has an autism spectrum disorder, according to estimates by the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)). Around the world, one per cent of the entire population – possibly two per cent – is on the spectrum.

In a special event in New York ahead of the Day, marked annually on 2 April, the UN and the international community gathered to renew their commitment to raising awareness about autism and the need for people with the disorder to have equal opportunity and full participation in society on equal basis with other citizens.

Cristina Gallach, the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, which co-organized the event along with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said in her opening remarks that to achieve an inclusive society, “we must ensure that the fundamental rights enshrined in the Convention on the [Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) are known and respected.”



Photo: CARE/David Rochkind, Design: Kim Conger

The Convention entered into force in 2008, to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by people with disabilities, and to promote their dignity.

In his statement, the President of the General Assembly, Peter Thomson said that awareness events, such as the one being held today, are important to helping people and their families lead more enjoyable lives.

“A lack of understanding of the causes, symptoms and effects of autism has in many cases led to a proliferation of misinformation, anxiety and confusion,” Mr. Thomson said in a statement delivered by Masud Bin Momen, Assembly Vice-President.

He called for early intervention programmes, health programmes and support services to ensure that people with autism can access education, training and jobs. “So that ultimately autism does not define them,” Mr. Thomson said, and they are seen “as who they are, people with ideas, capacities and contributions to make.”

Autism is mainly characterized by its unique social interactions, non-standard ways of learning, keen interests in specific subjects, inclination to routines, challenges in typical communications and particular ways of processing sensory information.

The stigmatization and discrimination associated with neurological differences remain substantial obstacles to diagnosis and therapies.

## *'We are failing to protect the rights of people with autism' – Keynote address*

“Autonomy and self-determination for people with autism cannot be separated from a discussion of their human rights,” said Simon Baron-Cohen, Director of the Autism Research Center at the University of Cambridge, in his keynote address.

Having studied autism for decades, Dr. Baron-Cohen said that many people on the spectrum have excellent attention to detail and the ability to spot patterns, for example, but need safeguarding because they trust people’s words as facts and have a hard time fitting in socially.

Referencing statistics, such as that half of people with autism are too afraid to leave their homes for fear that they will be taken advantage of, Dr. Baron-Cohen chided the international community.

“On the first human right, the right to dignity, as civilized nations, we are failing to protect the rights of people with autism.”

He defined autism as “an example of neurodiversity”, saying that “differently wired brains lead to different profiles of strengths and challenges, and should not be judged as better or worse. They’re just different. People with autism are asking for acceptance and respect.”

**AUDIO:** In terms of civil liberties for people with autism, the international community overall is living in “the Dark Ages,” Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, the Director of the Autism Research Centre at the University of Cambridge told a special event at UN Headquarters.

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## **[INTERVIEW: 'We are in a very fortunate situation since the Paris Agreement was adopted' – UNFCCC Executive Secretary](#)**

31 March 2017 – The [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change remains a momentous diplomatic success, universally supported by all countries when it was adopted in 2015 at a United Nations conference, and as of today, it has been ratified by 141 nations, surpassing the threshold for its entry into force.

The countries ambitious and inspiring commitments set out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change and shape how our planet will look tomorrow, and what we are going to leave behind for future generations.

The United Nations continues to receive examples of innovative climate action by governments, and over the past few weeks, for example India has announced bans on highly polluting vehicles while new research showed that solar power capacity globally grew 50 per cent in 2016, led by the United States and China.

This governmental momentum continues to be underpinned by companies, investors, cities, regions and territories including now many major oil companies who's CEOs have in recent weeks publicly spoken out in support of the Paris Agreement.

The UN framework support of the world's climate agenda continues to encourage Parties to implement and achieve their aims and ambitions under the Paris Agreement.

Patricia Espinosa Cantellano of Mexico is the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)). She has more than 30 years of experience at the highest levels in international relations, with a specialization in climate change, global governance, sustainable development, gender equality and protection of human rights.

**UN News: Do you see the same momentum and enthusiasm that helped fuel the adoption and entry into force of the Paris Agreement?**

We have 141 ratifications, which is really unprecedented for any multilateral treaty like the Paris Agreement

**Patricia Espinosa:** Definitely. We are in a very fortunate situation since the Paris Agreement was adopted. We have now seen a really long list of countries ratifying the Agreement. As of today, we have 141 ratifications, which is really unprecedented for any multilateral treaty like the Paris Agreement.

Only 16 months after its adoption, to have this really long, long list of ratifying countries from all regions of the world is a very encouraging sign. That means political support at the highest level is there; and not only that but also businesses, groups of civil society, scientists – everybody continues to be very active and engaged with the agenda that arrives from the Paris Agreement.

**UN News: And what steps do you see countries taking to implement the Paris Agreement?**

**Patricia Espinosa:** Well, there are different conditions. I think this is such a complex treaty that we need to be very mindful that it depends on the situation in which each country is, and which steps need to be taken. The first step needs to be the ratification. Secondly, we have different kinds of degrees of activity. I would say some countries have immediately gone into transforming their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions into Nationally Determined Contributions. As of today also we have more than 130 Nationally Determined Contributions, which are the national plans for implementing the commitments under the Paris Agreement. Now actual

implementation demands or requires the participation of the private sector; requires the transformation of those commitments into national development planning; into investment programs. So these are the steps that need to be followed and there are different degrees and different ways in which countries are doing it.

**VIDEO:** The world needs to accelerate the implementation of the Paris Agreement on the ground and come up with investment plans, UN climate chief, Patricia Espinosa, has said. Speaking to the UN News, Ms. Espinosa said the Paris Agreement presents a “clear roadmap towards higher ambitions.”

**UN News: How will the Paris Agreement limit global temperature rise to well under 2 degrees Celsius?**

**Patricia Espinosa:** Well the Paris Agreement sets a framework towards achieving that goal. This is the goal. Why? Because this is the temperature that science has said that would allow us to manage the needs of humanity with a healthy environmental situation; environmental balance. So, what the Paris Agreement does is to put it in a framework where we all need to strive to get there, and it also makes a framework for countries to progressively increase their ambitions; their commitments under the Paris Agreement, so that we can achieve climate neutrality by the middle of the century, and then really have the possibility of, in the second part of this century, get to this goal that has been established.

**UN News: And is the 1.5 degree goal realistic at this time?**

**Patricia Espinosa:** As of today, with the science that we have, with the technological solutions that we have and with the commitments that we have on the table, we're still not there. But at the same time, what is very encouraging is that we have seen transformations in terms of technologies, in terms of behaviours, in terms of commitments by different actors; not only governments – national governments – but also governments at the local level, so national authorities. We have seen all these transformations occurring much faster than we were able to foresee just a few years ago, so I think there are very clear signals that the trend is correct and that we are making progress into that direction.



A woman stands outside her temporary home and dried up maize crop in Epworth, Harare, Zimbabwe. The UN agency tasked with food security has projected that almost 40 million people in the Southern African region could face food insecurity by the peak of the coming lean season, between January and March 2017, when the effects of the drought are expected to peak. Photo: Kate Holt/IRIN



A parched field in Kenya where drought has been especially devastating to sub-Saharan agriculture. The UN estimates that over 17 million people are

currently in crisis and emergency food insecurity levels in member-countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), namely Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. Photo: ©FAO/Giulio Napolitano



Climate change: houses collapsing due to coastal erosion caused by rising sea levels in Shishmaref, Alaska. Photo: UNEP GRID Arendal/Lawrence Hislop



Rabi Island, Fiji. Rising sea levels and more extreme weather events pose an imminent threat to low-lying atoll islands across the Pacific. Photo: OCHA/Danielle Parry



Coral reefs are sensitive to climate change. According to UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner humans have left an indelible mark on the marine environment that has led to almost 20 per cent of coral reefs disappearing. Photo: UNEP/Jeffrey Maynard



Forests play a critical role for many countries in their ability to mitigate climate change. Photo: FAO/Rudolf Hahn



A new UN report shows World Heritage icons such as the Cape Floral Region Protected Areas of South Africa are at risk from climate change. Some 31 natural and cultural World Heritage sites in 29 countries across the world are becoming increasingly vulnerable. Photo: ©UNESCO/Leila Maziz

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**UN News: You just mentioned climate neutrality; can you just explain, in simple terms, what that means?**

**Patricia Espinosa:** Climate neutrality means a situation where the world can naturally absorb the emissions that will continue to be produced in our societies. For instance, in terms of agriculture, we know that combating hunger – ending hunger is one of the important Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), but it turns out that agriculture is a source of emissions – so that's one area where we will not be able to dispose completely of emissions, so we need to have a situation where our environment can absorb naturally those emissions.

What are our natural resources to absorb emissions? For instance, soils can absorb emissions; forests absorb emissions. The oceans also have that possibility. Today, emissions are too high, so our environment is not able to

absorb all of them, so we need to get to that neutrality; that balance.

We need to start with – or to accelerate as much as possible – the implementation on the ground

**UN News: So what are the next steps, at the international level, to implement the Paris Agreement?**

**Patricia Espinosa:**Well, at the international level, we need to do many things simultaneously, and we cannot have the luxury of waiting until we have finished one task to continue to the next. In terms of the negotiating process, we need to finalize as soon as possible – at the latest in 2018 – what is known as the Paris Agreement rule book, which are basically the rules which are needed in order to make the Agreement operational. What are going to be the rules for governments to report on the compliance of their commitments? What are going to be the rules for giving developing countries support in terms of technology, in terms of financing? These kind of rules need to be developed.

At the same time, the Paris Agreement presents a very clear roadmap towards higher ambitions. For instance, in 2018 we will have what is called the facilitative dialogue, which will be the first assessment of how much countries have made progress on implementation of their commitments under the Paris Agreement. In order to be able to raise ambition, hopefully out of that assessment we can identify where there are other areas of opportunity so that they can raise ambition. On the other hand, we need to start with – or to accelerate as much as possible – the implementation on the ground. So we need to do actions in the area of transport, housing, and the energy sector. We need to start getting to very specific plans and programmes, and very specific investment plans as well.

**UN News: And do you believe developed countries will meet the financial promises that were made in the Paris Agreement?**

**Patricia Espinosa:**Well, at Marrakesh we had a first report on the road map to the \$100 billion – which is what has been included in the Paris Agreement – and from that report that was done by the donor community together with the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development], things look positively. Now, it is not all of it that will come from public sources; we need to bear in mind that private financing will really play an important role, and in this sense, private investment will play a major role. So I think that of course while the \$100 billion is a very important goal that was included in the Paris Agreement, we need to know and we need to bear in mind that the transformation that is required in our economies will demand much bigger resources.

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## [INTERVIEW: Mark Bowden on his time in Afghanistan and on revamping international aid](#)

31 March 2017 – The conflict in Afghanistan is “partially forgotten,” the former United Nations Deputy Special Representative for the country has warned, calling for more aid for displaced families and a greater focus on bridging the poverty gaps.

“[Afghanistan](#) has been one of the most protracted crises, and I think people don’t realize the casualty rates that we’re dealing with here are second only to Syria,” Mark Bowden said in his last interview with UN News before leaving in late February after more than four years as the deputy of the UN Assistance Mission in the country ([UNAMA](#)).

At least 3,489 [civilians](#) were killed and 7,920 wounded in 2016, due in part to an increase in air raids, and attacks by the Taliban and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), according to UNAMA.

“I am worried that the situation has deteriorated in terms of the large numbers of displaced people that we see, but also in terms of the number of civilian casualties that take place,” Mr. Bowden said.

“We have seen a year-on-year increase in civilian casualties which just demonstrates that civilians are the most affected by the war. As the war progresses and appears to deepen, then I think there is a real cause for concern,” he stated.